

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-11 SAM-01 /082 W

----- 115078

P R 081415Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2947

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 0168

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF VT

SUBJECT: QADHAFI OUTFLANKS THE VATICAN

SUMMARY: A CONFERENCE CO-SPONSORED BY THE VATICAN AND THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT WAS HELD IN TRIPOLI FEBRUARY 1-6 UNDER THE TITLE "THE ISLAMIC CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE". QADHAFI PROMOTED THE IDEA AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS GIMMICK AND PAID THE EXPENSES OF ALL PARTICIPANTS, WHO INCLUDED A CARDINAL ON THE VATICAN SIDE. THE DISCUSSIONS WERE POLITICIZED BY THE LIBYANS, AND THE CONFERENCE WOUND UP ISSUING SOME ONE-SIDED "RECOMMENDATIONS" ON THE MIDEAST AND JERUSALEM, AMONG OTHER THINGS CONDEMNING ZIONISM AS "A RACIST AGGRESSIVE MOVEMENT". UNLIKELY THOUGH IT SEEMS, A VATICAN REPRESENTATIVE REPORTEDLY AGREED TO THIS LANGUAGE; EMBASSY ROME MAY WISH TO MAKE INQUIRIES. THE LIBYANS HAVE CLAIMED, AND THE VATICAN DENIED, THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. END SUMMARY.

1. UNDER THE JOINT AUSPICES OF THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT

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AND THE VATICAN, A CONFERENCE WITH THE GRAND TITLE OF

THE ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE WAS HELD IN TRIPOLI FEBRUARY 1-6. THE CONFERENCE HAD THE PRAISEWORTHY OBJECTIVE, ON THE SURFACE, OF PROVIDING A FORUM FOR INTER-FAITH CONTACTS, AND OF PROMOTING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT GOOD WILL WOULD BE INCREASED AS A RESULT, AND FROM QADHAFI'S POINT OF VIEW IT REPRESENTED AN ATTEMPT TO COUNTER HIS IMAGE IN THE WEST AS A MUSLIM FANATIC, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF HIS BAD PRESS FOR SUPPORTING MUSLIM EXTREMISTS IN LEBANON. WHAT THE VATICAN EXPECTED FROM IT IS HARD TO SAY, BUT A RANKING DELEGATION WAS SENT, HEADED BY A CARDINAL PIGNEDOLI, THE VATICAN OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF CONTACTS WITH NON-CHRISTIANS. THE RESULT, AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN PREDICTED BY ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH THE LIBYANS, CAN ONLY BE REGARDED AS AN EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE VATICAN.

2. THE LIBYANS ASSEMBLED A MOTLEY GROUP OF RELIGIOUS THINKERS AND OBSERVERS FOR THE CONFERENCE, AND FOOTED THE BILL FOR ALL EXPENSES. PROMINENT MUSLIM DIVINES ATTENDED, INCLUDING EGYPT'S DR. MUSTAPHA MAHMUD, BUT THERE WERE FEW, IF ANY, WELL KNOWN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIAN. THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDED OVER THREE DAYS OF MEETINGS AS A SCHOLARLY SYMPOSIUM, WITH PAPERS READ IN THE MORNING AND DEBATES IN THE EVENING WHICH OFTEN SHED MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT ON THE MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION. SQUABBLES BROKE OUT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, IN PARTICULAR BETWEEN THE ARAB CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS PARTICIPATING.

3. ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE CONFERENCE, AS ANNOUNCED, QADHAFI MADE AN APPEARANCE IN HIS CAPACITY AS AN ISLAMIC THINKER. HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE SHOCKED ALL BUT THE MOST INTOLERANT MUSLIMS PRESENT. AMONG OTHER THINGS, QADHAFI ACCUSED THE JEWS OF HAVING DELIBERATELY SUPPRESSED CERTAIN PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE AND THE TORAH WHICH PREDICTED MUHAMMAD'S COMING, SAID THAT THE CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE MUHAMMAD AS A PROPHET WAS "A GRIEVOUS ERROR", AND CALLED THE POPE'S ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE PRESENCE OF DIFFERING ACCOUNTS OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS WERE LEADING CHRISTIAN YOUTHMS:TO CONFUSION AND FINALLY ATHEISM. TURNING TO

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POLITICS, QADHAFI DECLARED THAT A SECULAR STATE WAS INEVITABLY A DICTATORSHIP, SINCE IT WAS GROUNDED IN NO DIVINE INSPIRATION, AND TO PROVE HIS THESIS HE PROCEEDED TO READ PASSAGES FROM HIS FIRST CHAPTER OF HIS POLITICAL TREATISE, WHICH HE CALLS THE GREEN BOOK. HE OFFERED FREE COPIES OF THE GREEN BOOK TO THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS, ALTHOUGH, AS HE SAID, HE USUALLY CHARGES \$3.40 FOR IT. IT WAS QUITE A PERFORMANCE, AND BY ALL ACCOUNTS LEFT THOSE

PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE NEW TO QADHAFI AND HIS WAYS GASPING.

4. THROUGHOUT THE CONFERENCE THE LIBYANS, ABETTED BY SOME MUSLIM ALLIES, DID THEIR BEST TO POLITICIZE THE DISCUSSIONS. THUS A LONG TELEGRAM WAS READ FROM AN ISLAMIC DIVINE WHO WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND CONDENMING THE JUDAICIZATION OF JERUSALEM BY THE LIBYAN MODERATOR. IN VIEW OF THIS, MOST OBSERVERS DID NOT THINK THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES CHARGED WITH DRAWING UP RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE ABLE TO DO SO, BUT THE LIBYANS OBVIOUSLY HAD OTHER IDEAS. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE CONFERENCE AS THEY APPEARED IN THE LIBYAN PRESS FEBRUARY 7:

....THE ISLAMIC SIDE DESIRES OF THE CHRISTIAN SIDE THAT IT MAKE EVERY EFFORT AND ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE CHURCH FROM THE CORDOBA MOSQUE, AND THAT IT WORK TO BRING THIS ABOUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

....BOTH SIDE LOOK WITH RESPECT ON ALL DIVINELY INSPIRED RELIGIONS, AND DISTINGUISH BETWEEN JUDAISM AND ZIONISM, SINCE ZIONISM IS A RACIST AGGRESSIVE MOVEMENT FOREIGN TO PALESTINE AND THE ORIENT.

....ADHERENCE TO RIGHT AND JUSTICE, CONCERN FOR PEACE AND FAITH, AND THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION, LEADS BOTH SIDES TO STRESS THE NATIONAL RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND ITS RIGHT TO RETURN TO ITS HOMES, TO STRESS THE ARAB CHARACTER OF THE CITY OF JERUSLALEM (SIC) AND TO REJECT THE PLANS TO JUDAICIZE, PARTITION, AND INTERNATIONALIZE (JERUSALEM), AND TO CONDEMN ANY INTERFERENCE WITH THE SANCTITY OF ITS HOLD SITES. BOTH SIDES DEMAND THE FREEING OF ALL PRISONERS IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE (RE-SIC), ESPECIALLY MUSLIM THEOLOGIANS AND CHRISTIAN MEND OF RELIGION. THEY ALSO, DEMAND THE LIBERATION OF ALL OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, AND

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CALL FOR THE CREATION OF A PERMANENT COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THE TRAITS OF THE SACRED CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM HOLY PLACES, AND TO REVEAL THIS BEFORE WORLD PUBLIC OPINION.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE REASONABLY NEUTRAL REFERENCES TO THE PHILIPPINES AND TO LEBANON, AND THANKS TO QADHAFI FOR HIS "POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATES AND HIS GREAT CONCERN FOR THE CONFERENCE WHICH CONTRIBUTE MUCH TO ITS SUCCESS".

5. GIVEN THE ONE-SIDED, ANTI-ISRAEL, AND EVEN ANTI-SEMITIC CHARACTER OF THIS LANGUAGE, AS WELL AS THE PENCHANT OF THE LIBYANS FOR DRAFTING THEIR OWN VERSIONS OF SUPPOSEDLY JOINT STATEMENTS, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THE VATICAN REPRESENTATIVES REALLY SIGNED OFF ON THIS DOCUMENT. WE

HAVE HEARD, HOWEVER, THAT ALTHOUGH CARDINAL PIGNEDOLI DID NOT SIGN THE RECOMMENDATIONS PERSONALLY, THE DOCUMENT DOES CARRY THE SIGNATURE OF A MEMBER OF THE VATICAN DELEGATION, APPENDED AFTER A LATE-NIGHT NEGOTIATING SESSION. EMBASSY ROME MAY WANT TO ASK THE VATICAN ABOUT THIS.

6. ONE WIDELY EXPECTED PRODUCT OF THE CONFERENCE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN LIBYA AND THE VATICAN. WE HAVE JUST SEEN THE FBIS REPORT, CITING LIBYAN RADIO IN ENGLISH, REPORTING THAT THE LIBYANS HAVE CLAIMED THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN WERE IN FACT ESTABLISHED, AND ALSO REPORTING AN AFP ITEM IN WHICH THE VATICAN DENIES THIS. THE LIBYANS SEEM TO HAVE DROPPED THIS CLAIM FAST, HOWEVER, AS THEY DO NOT MAKE IT IN TODAY'S PRESS OR RADIO NEWS.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MOSLEMS, CHRISTIANS, DOCUMENTS, ANTISEMITISM, MEETING PROCEEDINGS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 08 FEB 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ellisoob  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976TRIPOL00168  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760048-0408  
**From:** TRIPOLI  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760270/aaaacjoh.tel  
**Line Count:** 186  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ellisoob  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 03 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <03 MAY 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <23 AUG 2004 by ellisoob>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** QADHAFI OUTFLANKS THE VATICAN SUMMARY: A CONFERENCE CO-SPONSORED BY THE VATICAN  
**TAGS:** PFOR, XF, VT, LY, (QADHAFI, MU'AMMAR)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006